Alex Rising:
The Raison d'Être of Music in the Works of Anthony Burgess

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Introduction

"All he knew was that the journey was necessary." (*1985* 101)

The twentieth-century British writer Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970)—described as "our most musical author" by the twentieth-century British composer Benjamin Britten (Edward Benjamin Britten, 1913-76)—asserts in "The Raison d'Être of Criticism in the Arts" (1947), included in *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951): "A work of art is a curious object. Isn't it infectious? Unlike machinery, hasn't it the power of transforming the person who encounters it towards the condition of the person who created it? (I [Forster] use the clumsy phrase 'towards the condition' on purpose.)" (*Two Cheers* 117; underlining mine). In his essay, Forster refers to the nineteenth-century German composer Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) and his Symphony No. 4 in E minor, op. 98, to explain what such an "encounter" is like:

> There has been an infection from Brahms through his music to myself. Something has passed. I have been transformed towards his condition,

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> he has called me out of myself, he has thrown me into a subsidiary dream; and when the passacaglia is trodden out, and the transformation closed, I too feel surprise. (*Two Cheers* 117; underlining mine)

Forster calls the process of such "transformation" "the supremely important step in our pilgrimage through the fine arts" (*Two Cheers* 117; underlining mine).

As Forster suggests in his choice of the word "transformation," music transforms young Alex, the main character in the novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) by the twentieth-century British writer and composer Anthony Burgess (John Anthony Burgess Wilson, 1917-1993). Indeed, music transforms young Alex towards adulthood in the course of his existential "pilgrimage" through the novel. Burgess scholar Sandrine Sorlin, in "*A Clockwork Orange*: A Linguistic Symphony," calls the novel "a linguistic symphony" in which "musical language and poetic language are inextricably linked in this novel" (*Music in Literature* 45). According to Sorlin,

> *A Clockwork Orange* is structured like the symphonies of the Romantic age. The novel is indeed made of three parts reflecting the three great moments of a sonata-form (traditionally characterizing the First Movement of a symphony). A sonata is composed of an exposition, a development and a recapitulation (before the final coda): presented in the exposition, the themes of the symphony are then developed before being exposed again. (*Music in Literature* 45-46)

Sorlin suggests in this way that Burgess's novel would not stand by itself without the musical elements and structures that support the story's dramatic action and Alex's character development.

In this paper, I compare Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) with his dramatized music play of the same title (1986) in order to explore the author's interests in combining literature and music as a way to consider the philosophical

and theological issues of free will vs. determinism, issues which can be as seen in the character development of the protagonist, young Alex. To deepen an understanding of Burgess's continuing interest in these issues, I also consider such relevant works as Burgess's novels *The Clockwork Testament or: Enderby's End* (1974) and *1985* (1978).

Indeed, throughout much of his mature period as a novelist, Burgess seems obsessed with the issues of freedom and obedience to authority that he first raises in *Clockwork* (1962). He revisits these issues with stronger faith in *Enderby* (1974), in *1985* (1978) and finally in his dramatized version, Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1986). Of his 1986 drama, Burgess seems ready to let go of his obsession, saying, "It is my farewell to a preoccupation which has continued too long. I mean an enforced concern with a book which belongs very much to my past" (*Anthony Burgess's A Clockwork* xx, 1986).

The use of musical elements and structures in Burgess's novels is not surprising because Burgess was also a composer of music. His twenty-five-year-long preoccupation with the musical and thematic issues in *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) suggest that "a linguistic symphony," as Sorlin calls it, can also be considered as the author's own "conversational symphony" in which he converses with readers, with God, and with himself about issues of free will and determinism, freedom and obedience, that are as old as the world of classical antiquity and as relevant now as they have ever been.

1. Symphonic Encounters of Two "Alexes"

"God works in a mysterious way." (*Little Wilson and Big God* 278)

In the film adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) by the American director Stanley Kubrick, the notorious attention paid to the violent nature of

the protagonist Alex has tended to obscure the fact that there are actually two characters by the name of "Alex" in both the novel and the film: young Alex, of course, and another character known as F. Alexander. On first encountering F. Alexander, young Alex says with apparent surprise, "F. Alexander. Good Bog, I thought, he is another Alex" (*Clockwork* 117; underlining mine). Burgess explains the meaning of the name "Alex" in *1985* by noting that "Alex," is "short for Alexander, which means in Greek 'defender of men'" (*1985* 80; underlining mine). Early in *A Clockwork Orange*, (Part One, Chapter Two in the 1962 novel and Act One in the 1986 dramatized version), F. Alexander is attacked and his wife is beaten to death by "Alex and his three droogs (*drugi* being the Russian word for 'friends')" (Biswell 241). Up to that point in the story, F. Alexander has been writing a book paradoxically entitled *A Clockwork Orange*. In the course of this break-in, Alex and his droogs also find and steal part of F. Alexander's manuscript. Much later in the story, (Part Three, Chapter Four in the novel and Act Two in the dramatized version), a badly beaten Alex meets F. Alexander again by coincidentally visiting the older Alexander's house in order to seek medical assistance. In this second encounter, an older and possibly wiser Alex realizes that F. Alexander has been trying to "defend men," including young Alex, from the controlling influence of the State by raising his "sword-pen."

The choice of names for these two characters is far from coincidental. As Burgess explains, "novelists tend to give close attention to the names they attach to their characters. *Alex* is a rich and noble name, and I intended its possessor to be sympathetic, pitiable, and insidiously identifiable with us" (*1985* 80; underlining mine). Burgess's own unhappy childhood experiences may have caused Burgess to feel sorry for Alex and pity him. In fact, Burgess lost his own mother early in his childhood, as he relates in *Little Wilson and Big God* (1987): "At home there were things I would never learn. One was the relationship between mother

and son. I was dimly aware of a deprivation when, one night in bed, entertaining fantasies of wantonness, I excused myself to God by crying aloud: 'I never had a mother.' I was not encouraged to express tenderness" (86-87). Even though he had a stepmother, Burgess claims, "My stepmother fulfilled a stepmother's duties, which did not include the bestowal of love" and "I had a godmother, my Aunt Lily, but she brought no fairy pumpkin" (*Little Wilson* 87). The lack of a mother's love and affection might have caused Burgess to project his own emotional losses onto Alex and identify with his own fictional creation, for as Burgess has Alex say, "There was not one veck [person or man] you could trust in the whole bolshy [big] world" (*Clockwork*, 1962, 123) and he cries, " 'Oh, what am I to do?' I boohooed to myself. 'Oh, Bog [God] in Heaven help me'" (*Clockwork*, 1962, 124). For Burgess, the scenes in which Alex has no one to trust might reflect in fiction the author's childhood about which Burgess writes, "I belonged to a gang of orphans, kids who could play in the yard so long" (*Little Wilson* 88). Such unsupervised freedom suggests that no one cared for the children.

A rich array of additional meanings are suggested in the name of "Alex," as Burgess himself notes: "*Alex* has other connotations–a *lex*: a law (unto himself); a *lex(is)*: a vocabulary (of his own); a (Greek) *lex*: without a law" (*1985* 80). These three alternative meanings suggest that Alex, living in his personal world of music and violence (in Part One of the novel), is a law unto himself. He speaks his own languages, and he does not follow any one else's rules. After his first violent encounter with F. Alexander, young Alex is arrested for battery and sent to prison. There he is given a new government-issued identity, "6655321," upon which he observes, "I was 6655321 and not your little droog Alex no longer" (*Clockwork* 57). While in prison, Alex is subjected to the government-approved Ludovico technique, a torturous aversion therapy designed to produce behavior modification in juvenile delinquents and other social deviants. (Ludovico, with the highly ironic

meaning of "illustrious fighter," is the Italian form of the French name Louis and, significantly, the German name Ludwig.) In the course of his treatments in the Ludovico technique, Alex is tied down with his eyes forced open for long periods of time while being subjected to continuous video images of violence accompanied by loud classical music, including Beethoven. At the same time, Alex is placed under the influence of nausea-inducing drugs that are designed to render him averse to his favorite forms of violence and music. The treatments are successful, and Alex becomes incapable of enjoying music or committing acts of violence.

Somewhat later in the novel, F. Alexander inadvertently, and most ironically, gives the "reformed" Alex a safe "HOME" [sic] after Alex, rendered harmless but also defenseless by the Ludovico technique, is released from prison and soon afterwards is severely beaten by one of his former droogs. Urgently in need of refuge and care for his injuries, Alex desperately seeks shelter: "Home, home, home, it was home I was wanting, and it was HOME I came to, brothers. HOME, it said" (*Clockwork* 112). The badly beaten Alex knocks on the door of a nearby house to ask for help, and F. Alexander, not recognizing his former assailant and the slayer of his wife earlier in the novel, opens the door, saying, "Come in, whoever you are. God help you, you poor victim, come in and let's have a look at you" (*Clockwork* 113).

F. Alexander innocently considers this apparent stranger "a victim of the modern age" (*Clockwork* 113). Eventually, however, in the course of conversations with his young visitor, F. Alexander identifies young Alex as one of the violent droogs who had caused him such pain and suffering earlier in the story. Unable to defend himself and fearing F. Alexander's revenge, young Alex determines to escape and eventually attempts suicide by leaping out a window. Alex fails in this attempt, but F. Alexander is wrongfully arrested for attempted murder and

sent to prison, in a highly paradoxically plot twist, so as to assure young Alex's safety. Burgess has thus made the story line and the characters themselves come full circle. In the first encounter of the two Alexes–young Alex and F. Alexander–violent young Alex goes to prison; in the second encounter of the two, vengeful F. Alexander goes to prison. Burgess manipulates plot and characters with darkly comic irony, but a close reading may also identify Burgess's use of such musical patterns as theme and variations and exposition and recapitulation to structure the novel's dramatic action and character development, as discussed later.

My discussion must also circle back within the plot in order to interpret the irony of F. Alexander going to prison. Much earlier in the story, when Alex and his droogs attacked the house of F. Alexander, young Alex, as noted earlier, finds a manuscript entitled *A Clockwork Orange* written by F. Alexander. In the introduction to the later music-drama version of *A Clockwork Orange* (1986), for which Burgess wrote the book and composed the music, Burgess states, "This is not grand opera. It is a little play which any group may perform, and it is my farewell to a preoccupation which has continued too long." (*Anthony Burgess' s A Clockwork* xx). In the 1962 novel, Burgess somehow leaves out the name of F. Alexander until the end. In Act One of the dramatized version, young Alex finds F. Alexander's name given as the author of a novel entitled *A Clockwork Orange* and expresses surprise to find the author's family name to be his own given name: "And the name is Alexander, the same as mine. There's a cohen sidence [sic] [coincidence]" (*Anthony Burgess's A Clockwork* 8). There are many other significant differences between the novel and the dramatized version. The storyline of the dramatized version is much shorter than that of the novel and, as required by stage conventions, the drama consists mostly of conversations.

There is still a widespread misunderstanding of the implications of *A Clockwork Orange* in its many forms–in print, on film, and on stage. The greatest

source of confusion is likely to stem from the fact that the American edition of the novel (1963), on which Kubrick's 1971 film was based, omits Burgess's intended final chapter twenty-one which is included in the British edition (1962). Chapter twenty-one, in which young Alex manages to grow up and live a conventional adult life, is in many ways the most significant chapter in the story and clarifies the author's intentions. Burgess was deeply distressed that many American readers and filmgoers who saw Kubrick's film of the novel were unaware of his intended ending to *A Clockwork Orange*. As Burgess wrote in *1985*:

> The novel has not been well understood. Readers, and viewers of the film made from the book, have assumed that I, a most unviolent man, am in love with violence. I am not, but I am committed to freedom of choice, which means that if I cannot choose to do evil nor can I choose to do good. It is better to have our streets infested with murderous young hoodlums than to deny individual freedom of choice. (*1985* 80; underlining mine)

Burgess's reference to "freedom of choice" derives from the teachings of Saint Augustine, an early Church Father, on the nature of "free will." As Burgess explains his own sense of belief arising from the Catholic tradition, "What I have in particular is a kind of residual Christianity that oscillates between Augustine and Pelagius" (*1985* 82). Augustine argues that humans have "free will" to choose between good and evil; they must have the freedom to make moral choices, or human morality is meaningless.

The novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) explores similar moral and spiritual territory. Burgess interprets his novel's themes in relation to his religious views. As he notes in *You've Had Your Time* (1990): "Brought up as a Catholic (and the book is more Catholic or Judaic than Protestant), I naturally considered that humanity is defined by its capacity for St Augustine's *liberum arbitrium*, and that moral

choice cannot exist without a moral polarity" (61). Clearly, this is the dilemma Burgess poses in *Clockwork* (1962): Should young Alex be free to choose between a life of violence or a life of obedience? Or should the state take away this God-given freedom and force him to obey society's laws, not by choice but by social conditioning?

In a similar theological vein, Burgess explains the novel's plot structure: "I had structured the work with some care. It was divided into three sections of seven chapters each, the total figure being, in traditional arithmology, the symbol of human maturity. My young narrator, the music-loving thug Alex, ends the story by growing up and renouncing violence as a childish toy." (*You've Had* 60). What choice does Alex make in the final chapter? Burgess suggests that "Man was put together by God, though it took him a long time." (*1985* 83). He continues, "What God has joined together, even though it be an unholy trinity of a human brain, let no man put asunder" (*1985* 83). For the purposes of Burgess's and Alex's moral growth, Alex has to encounter F. Alexander again. To do this, Burgess presents young Alex in his arrested childhood and F. Alexander in his adulthood and then make them connect as part of an epic struggle for salvation. Burgess may have needed to save himself from his tragic memories of an unhappy early life by finding a way for Alex to attain salvation. Alex needs to encounter F. Alexander a second time in order to understand the errors of his past. The second encounter of the two Alexes is an opportunity for young Alex to reflect on his wayward youth. Burgess scholar Blake Morrison argues, in his 1996 Introduction to the British edition of the novel (2000 Penguin edition), that "the fictionalizing of this episode in *A Clockwork Orange* was a catharsis for Burgess" (*Clockwork* xiv). By having Alex confront and purge his demons, Burgess may have faced and exorcized his own.

2. A “Crime and Punishment” Symphony

“Why fight for the bastards?” (*Little Wilson and Big God* 278)

A Clockwork Orange is said to have been based, in part, on a horrible event in the life of Burgess’s wife Lynne (Llewela Wilson) which occurred in London in 1944. According to Burgess scholar Andrew Biswell in *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess*, Lynne was the victim of a brutal assault on the streets of London:

> Walking home from her office one night during the blackout, Lynne had been viciously attacked by a small gang of American men, presumably deserters, who had robbed her in the street and kicked her as she lay screaming on the ground. One of these assailants tried to break her finger to remove her gold wedding ring. She had been pregnant, but she miscarried as a result of the beating she received. She was told that the dead child would have been a boy. When Burgess received Sonia Brownell’s letter, he went to Major Meldrum and asked for permission to go to England on compassionate leave to visit his hospitalized wife. This was refused, and Burgess’s resentment of Meldrum intensified. The consequences of the attack on Lynne were immense. (Biswell 107-108; underlining mine)

Burgess might have channeled his bitterness toward Major Meldrum into the development of the character F. Alexander, who tries to fight the government. At the same time, Burgess’s rage toward the gang of assailants may have inspired the character Alex, who ravages the lives of others along with his own. In some ironic plot twists, Burgess punishes Alex by way of the government and punishes the government (and F. Alexander) by way of Alex. It is as if Burgess creates variations on the same melodic theme, arranged in recurring and contrasting forms, as in a symphony. Referring to the original violent break-in of F. Alexander’s

home by Alex and his droogs, Morrison contends that "the fictionalizing of this episode is 'an act of charity' to his [Burgess's] wife's assailants, since he chooses to write it as if from their point of view rather than their victims" (*A Clockwork* xiv; underlining mine). As Morrison calls the novel "an act of charity," forgiving criminals is not easy for victims.

Before completing the 1962 novel, Burgess and Lynne visited Russia in the summer of 1961, for according to Biswell, "Burgess had been impressed by Alexander Pushkin's verse-novel *Eugene Onegin,* parts of which he had memorized in the original Russian, and he read Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in English translation shortly before he sailed" (Biswell 237). While in Russia, Burgess conceived a plan for the structure of his novel *A Clockwork Orange*: "He later recalled a conversation about Dostoyevsky's novel with a waiter in a Leningrad restaurant, who told him that it was 'a crime to write it and a punishment to read it.'" (Biswell 237; underlining mine). The novel *A Clockwork Orange* is a "crime and punishment" story presented through the actions and feelings of Alex. Biswell argues that "A letter from 1961 confirms that Dostoyevsky was at the front of his mind as he was at work on the early section of the novel" (Biswell 237). In the letter, Burgess describes his Dostoyevskyan struggles with the structure of the novel: "I've just completed Part I—which is just sheer crime. Now comes punishment. . . . My horrible juvenile delinquent hero is emerging as too sympathetic a character—almost Christ-like, set upon by the scourging police. You see what I mean by moral deterioration" (Biswell 238; underlining mine).

In the later dramatized version (1986) —with Burgess's own book, lyrics, and music, —Burgess punishes Kubrick for the crime of his film adaptation: "A man bearded like Stanley Kubrick comes on playing, in exquisite counterpoint, 'Singin' in the Rain' on a trumpet. He is kicked off the stage" (*Anthony Burgess's*

A Clockwork 50-51; underlining mine). Burgess scholar Paul Phillips, in *A Clockwork Counterpoint: The Music and Literature of Anthony Burgess,* interprets the scene in which Kubrick appears: "In his 1986 stage version of *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess set both tunes together polyphonically in a satirical scene poking fun at Kubrick" (Phillips 146; underlining mine). Paradoxically, as two other Burgess scholars Erick Alder and Dietmar Hauck observe in *Music and Literature: Music in the Works of Anthony Burgess and E. M. Forster*, "Unfortunately, the most brutal of Burgess's novels is also the best known in the literary world, which is mainly due to Kubrick's film version" (Alder and Hauck 21). Burgess was deeply offended by the 1971 motion picture because "his philosophical novella about good and evil had become a profoundly disturbing display of graphic violence" (Phillips 146; underlining mine). According to Biswell, "the UK Heinemann edition of 1962 and the US Norton edition of 1963, have different endings" (Biswell 247).

Burgess's complaints against Kubrick, of course, arise from Kubrick's use of the incomplete American edition of *A Clockwork Orange* as the basis for his film adaptation. According to Phillips, "Kubrick's decision to base the film on the truncated American edition of the novel set Burgess raging in interviews, articles, and his autobiography about the publisher's decision to issue the book without the final chapter" (Phillips 146). Phillips continues by citing Burgess's own angry words:

> A vindication of free will had become an exaltation of the urge to sin. I was worried. The British version of the book shows Alex growing up and putting violence by as a childish toy; Kubrick confessed that he did not know this version: an American, though settle in England, he had followed the only version that Americans were permitted to know. (Phillips 146)

Burgess eventually directed his rage against Kubrick into something like poetic justice. Burgess might well have punished Kubrick by kicking him off the stage in the dramatized version which Burgess created over a decade after the film adaptation's debut. Nevertheless, Burgess admits in *You've Had Your Time,* "*A Clockwork Orange*, solely because of Kubrick's film, had appeared in many countries and in languages I could not read" (297). Burgess acknowledges, however, that "American reviewers understood what I was trying to do" (*You've Had* 60). "It was gratifying to be understood in America, humiliating to be misread in my own country. American critics forced me to take my own work seriously and to ponder whether the implied moral of the novel was sound" (*You've Had* 61). As Burgess continues, "*A Clockwork Orange*. . . was considered a remarkable and brilliantly imaginative novel, vital and inventive. Inevitably it will be compared with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* . . . but the comparison is not really helpful" (*You've Had* 62).

Biswell questions whether Burgess's fulminations were completely true to the author's actual thinking about the novel:

> Although Burgess believed that the presence or absence of this twenty-first chapter made a significant difference to the meaning of the novel, it is evident from his writings on the subject that he held different opinions at different times as to which ending was "correct." The difference in emphasis between the two versions is best explained with reference to the theological contention that underpins so much of Burgess's thinking: Between Augustinianism and Pelagianism." (Biswell 247)

Depending on which version one consults, the British edition of 1962 or the American edition of 1963, the novel can be seen as a story of redemption or damnation. According to Biswell, "by emphasizing the unreformed sinfulness of Alex, the twentieth chapter reveals itself to be an Augustinian conclusion. Alex

has been ‘cured,’ but not saved” (Biswell 248). On the other hand, Biswell notes, “Turning away from ultra-violence may be interpreted as Pelagian, in the sense that Alex acknowledges his potential for goodness autonomously, without the direct intervention of divine grace. At no point does he express remorse for his former wickedness, yet the position he articulates here is a willed and reasoned turning away from his former criminality. For this reason, the twenty-first chapter is a Pelagian conclusion. These theological resonances are everywhere present, though nowhere stated, in the novel’s two possible endings” (Biswell 249).

Alex as a juvenile delinquent represents “free will,” but he loses this freedom along with his own name when he becomes prisoner number “6655321” in Part Two in the novel. As a result of his Ludovico technique treatments, Alex is conditioned to suffer while listening to the music he loved, a punishment for his past crimes. Once he has lost his name and his free will, he cannot enjoy listening to music or indulging in his former violent ways. To escape this punishment and regain his original identity requires Alex to undergo another encounter with his “alter-Alex,” F. Alexander.

Music is used in the novel as a way to measure whether Alex is “himself” or not. When he cannot bear to listen to the “Ode to Joy,” it means that Alex has been cured, but the “Ode to Joy” is conversely a “cry to God” as long as Alex suffers from “not being himself.” The only character in the novel who worries about Alex is the prison chaplain called “Prison Charlie.” Upon seeing Alex after his Ludovico technique treatments, the chaplain remarks, “God help the lot of us.” Alex cries mournfully, “Am I just to be like a clock-work orange?” (*Clockwork* 94). Burgess answers Alex’s question some years after the novel’s publication, “The gates of heaven are closed to the boy [Alex], since music is a figure of celestial bliss.” (*1985* 80). Indeed, punishment for young Alex will endure so long as music can bring him neither joy nor consolation.

If readers wish to understand the novel as Burgess may have intended, they, too, must exercise their free will and choose to read the final chapter by themselves. Similarly, Alex needs to "choose" his ending by himself. Which ending, the twentieth chapter or the twenty-first chapter would Alex choose? "Alex" the character may then, paradoxically, be a "reader." Enderby in *Clockwork Testament*, who shares many of the views of the prison chaplain, breathes deeply and says: "If you get rid of evil you get rid of choice. You've got to have things to choose between, and that means good and evil. If you don't choose, you're not human any more. You're something else. Or you're dead" (432; underlining mine). To save his own life and humanity, then, Alex must choose, as the reader must, to believe again in free will. Otherwise, human life descends to the level of an unthinking machine, a mere "clockwork orange."

3. Symphony of Resurrection

"There is no real death in music." (*This Man and Music* 190)

Although the 1963 American edition of *A Clockwork Orange* did not include the twenty-first chapter, Burgess was pleased with what American reviews had to say about it in the publications *Time, Hudson Review*, and *The New York Herald Tribune*. As *Time* said:

> It may look like a nasty little shocker, but Burgess has written that rare thing in English letters–a philosophical novel. The point may be overlooked because the hero tells all in nadsat [Burgess's made-up language by combining English and Russian] which serves to put him where he belongs–half in and half out of the human race. The pilgrim's progress of a beatnik Stavogrin is a serious and successful moral essay. Burgess argues quite simply that Alex is more of a man as an evil man

> than as a good zombie. The clockwork of a mechanical society can never counterfeit the organic vitality of moral choice. Goodness is nothing if evil is not accepted as a possibility. (*You've Had* 60; underlining mine)

Indeed, as *Time* claims, the novel is philosophical suggestive of moral choices. Less sympathetically, *Hudson Review* noted that "the novel clearly turned Alex into an inarticulate apostle of existential or even Christian freedom and by a perverse logic, images of violence are put at the service of a dreadful, dead-end concept of freedom" (*You've Had* 60; underlining mine). But then, as *The New York Herald Tribune* observed:

> Love cannot exist without the possibility of hate, and by forcing men to abdicate their right to choose one over the other, society turns men into automata. Thus Burgess points his stunning moral: in a clockwork society, human redemption will have to arise out of evil. (*You've Had* 60; underlining mine)

The three American journals adopt somewhat different views toward the novel, but all of them show a clear awareness of the issues of freedom and moral choice, opposed to enforced obedience and dehumanizing conformity.

Over twenty years after the novel's publication, Burgess offers his own evolved views on the meaning of the novel and the moral trajectory of his anti-hero, young Alex. In 1985, Burgess explains some of his reasons for writing the novel *A Clockwork Orange*:

> Man is living on borrowed time; cure, for the night is coming. . . . Though all men are ill, some are less ill than others. Call, for convenience, the less ill ones well, and we have two kinds of being–we and they. . .us and them. They are ill, we must cure them. It was the sense of this division between well us and sick them that led me to write, in 1960, a short novel called *A Clockwork Orange*. It is not, in my view, a very

> good novel–too didactic, too linguistically exhibitionist–but it sincerely presented my adherence of the view that some people were criminal and others not. . . . The delinquents were, of course, not quite human beings: they were minors, and they had no vote; they were very much them as opposed to us, who represented society. . . . I imagined an experimental institution in which a generic delinquent, guilty of every crime of rape to murder, was given aversion therapy and rendered incapable of contemplating, let alone perpetrating, an anti-social act without a sensation of profound nausea." (78-79).

Burgess's comments reflect his views that criminality is a form sickness if not madness, while also showing his concern for an "us vs. them" social order that creates and is created by such social deviants as young Alex.

Consequently, most people, including Burgess's fictional characters, need a theory of "right and wrong" for making choices between "good and evil." As Enderby argues in *Clockwork Testament* in *Complete Enderby*:

> Evil is the destructive urge. Not to be confused with mere wrong. Wrong is what the government doesn't like. Sometimes a thing can be wrong and evil at the same time–murder, for instance. But then it can be right to murder. Like you people going round killing the Vietnamese and so on. Evil called right" (430).

Enderby continues, "Right and wrong are fluid and interchangeable. What's right one day can be wrong the next. And vice versa" (*Complete Enderby* 431; underlining mine). The notion that "what's right one day can be wrong the next" is a central theme of *A Clockwork Orange*. Even living human beings, as well as fictional characters, cannot remain "right" all through their lives. No one is perfect or perfectly consistent. As Enderby continues: "Nobody . . . has any clear idea about good. Oh, giving money to the poor perhaps. Helping old ladies across

the street. That sort of thing. Evil's different. Everybody knows evil" (*Complete Enderby* 431). Then he adds carefully, we are "Totally free to choose between good and evil" (*Complete Enderby* 431). "But we're disposed to do evil rather than good. History is the record of that. Given the choice, we're inclined to do the bad thing. That's all it means. We have to make a strong effort to do the good thing" (*Complete Enderby* 431; underlining mine). Enderby thus sums up the thinking of many thoughtful people (and of less-than-thoughtful people, too) who have serious reservations about extending the right of free will to social deviants like Alex and his droogs. Philosophically, the question of whether human beings are basically good or basically evil may remain open, but there is, as Enderby admits, too much evidence indicating that far too often most people will choose to do the wrong thing. Where does this leave us? That question, too, remains open.

Taking a more optimistic turn, however, Burgess reaffirms the themes of good and evil and the need for free choice if one is to be a fully human being in the finale of his dramatized version of *A Clockwork Orange*, with the entire company singing:

> Do not be a clockwork orange,
> Freedom has a lovely voice.
> Here is good, and there is evil —
> Look on both, then take your choice.
> Sweet in juice and hue and aroma,
> Let's not be changed to fruit machines.
> Choice is free but seldom easy —
> That's what human freedom means! (*Burgess's A Clockwork* 51)

Then, after the choice is made, as Alex says, "You can start your Ode to Joy" (*Burgess's A Clockwork* 50). As Sorlin adds, "While Beethoven sets Schiller's words to music, Burgess sets music to words in his novel" (*Music in Literature*

48). Although he uses Beethoven in the novel, Burgess uses his own music in the dramatized version, thereby setting "his" own music to words.

Conclusion

"*Hodie Christus natus est.*" (Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols, op.* 28)

" 'The Ninth,' I said. 'The glorious Ninth'" (*Clockwork* 132). Why does Alex choose to listen to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, of all things, in his efforts to resurrect himself from his "death-like" state on the edge of his transition from youth to young adulthood? He is then fifteen years old, in Part Three, Chapter Six, and a brutal juvenile delinquent. He is eighteen in Part Three, Chapter Seven, and by then he is already an adult. Burgess says in a 1978 interview with Samuel Coale, "A work of art has some kind of moral content. . . . the great work of art is neutral. It's fairly harmless" (*Conversations with Anthony Burgess* 124). Burgess then talks about Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: "God is good. The experience of God is the experience of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, infinitely magnified" (*Conversations* 124; underlining mine). Thus, Alex experiences God through the Ninth Symphony in order to revive himself and recover his "free will." But he does not go back to the violent selfish "self" that he used to be. He chooses a better way in the original final chapter, number twenty-one.

In that intended final chapter, Alex meets an old friend Pete who now has a wife. As Alex and the friend converse, Alex realizes what he himself must do in the future. He says, "I was eighteen now, just gone. Eighteen was not a young age. . . . And there was this like French poet set by old Benjy Britt [Benjamin Britten], who had done all his best poetry by the age of fifteen. . . . Eighteen was not all that young an age, then. But what was I going to be?" (*Clockwork* 140). Then, seeing his old friend and the friend's wife, Alex thinks, "That was something I would

have to get started on, a new like chapter beginning" (*Clockwork* 141; underlining mine).

At this point, thoughtful readers may realize that in reading *A Clockwork Orange* they are actually having a conversation with Alex from the beginning of the novel to its proper, intended end. At the same time, readers may also vicariously experience Burgess's "catharsis" by appreciating Alex's final "grown-up" phase in chapter twenty-one. Of course, music helps to keep the conversation flowing, as it were, harmoniously. The repetition of the phrase "What's it going to be then, eh?" suggests that to know Alex's story this is precisely the question that readers must ask Alex when they listen to his story, instead of being the question Alex asks his readers. Consequently, the novel is kept moving along through conversations between Alex and readers. In the dramatized version, the conversations become more authentic with the real voices of the stage actors directed toward the audience. As Sorlin observes, "The text is a musical score, and . . . the reader is its conductor. . . . As a linguistic symphony, *A Clockwork Orange* appeals to both the reader's ears and eyes" (*Music in Literature* 53).

Continuing the theme of conversation, in a 1971 interview with G. Riemer, Burgess states what he thinks is most important in human interaction:

> There is only one purpose in any social communion, and that's learning about the other person. . . . The really important things in life are people getting together, meeting, talking, praying. Possibly deciding, possibly reaching decisions. So they can live with someone with whom they're going to have phatic communion. If we are concerned with building a state, we're going to have to get more satisfactory phatic communion. There is nothing else to learn. There is nothing more to learn. Can you think of anything else in life? . . . But is there anything more important than people talking together? I can't think of anything. . . . it *should* be

taught. (*Conversations* 44-45).

Burgess was deeply worried by the world situation following the Second World War. As he reflects, "The dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki started a new era–one in which we face the possibility of the death of the race. Because of his strange cerebral make-up, the horror created by man can be the means of destroying man: the supreme product of reason is in the hands of unreason." (*1985* 77). Burgess may have realized that to survive in such a world–for him, anyway–was to believe in God as a matter of choice. He continues, "In the absence of a new philosophy of man, I must cling to whatever I already have. What I have in general is a view of man which I may call Hebreo-Helleno-Christian-humanist." (*1985* 81). Burgess continues:

> Whoever or whatever Jesus Christ was, people marvel at him because he "taught with authority." There have been very few authoritative teachers in the world, though there have been plenty of authoritarian demagogues. It is possible, just possible, that by attempting the techniques of self-control that Christ taught something can be done about our schizophrenia–the ethics of which goes back to the Book of Genesis. I believe that the ethics of the Gospels can be given a secular application. I am sure too that this has never seriously been tried. (*1985* 82).

It is more than a little ironic to think of young Alex and Jesus Christ in the same context, and yet what Burgess suggests is that both "defenders of men" had to undergo trials and transformations that led each one to the death of his old self and a resurrection to a new and spiritual self. Surely what the world needs now, if humanity is to save itself from self-annihilation, is something akin to this, that is, the spiritual rebirth of all humankind.

Recently the entire population of Japan, native and non-native, received

individual numbers called "My Number" which are assigned for life to their own names. I am reminded of Alex's number "6655321" which took away his personal identity along with his "free will." Nevertheless, in his trials and transformations through his struggles against the State's imposition of both the number and the Ludovico technique, Alex eventually acquires a sense of social responsibility.

"My Number" ideally means that what defines the individual is not exactly "free will" but a sense of allegiance to a rational and decent social order, i.e., something larger than one's self which nevertheless respects the rights of the individual. Each person's own name, however, carries meanings and memories, much in the way that the name "Alex" contains multiple meanings along with multiple levels of irony. The person that Alex will ideally become might, in a curious way, be we ourselves, the readers of this novel. The Alex reborn to "free will" rises at the end of the novel, much as "we" the readers who achieve "free will" may rise in order to survive in a changing world.

Burgess, like many other serious thinkers, believes that history repeats itself. If this is so, we may have to pray, along with actually working, for a better world as we rise with God by listening, along with mature Alex, to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Even if we forget the fine points of what Burgess's novel is saying about life, music can remind us of the direction in which we, like Alex, need to go. Serving us a route to salvation might be the chief raison d'être of music in Burgess's works. Through the spiritual power of music, *Hodie Alex nova natus est* (This day a new Alex is born).

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